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SUPERINTENDENT LUNA PROPOSES BUDGET TO IMPLEMENT FIRST YEAR OF TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

BOISE – Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna today proposed a budget that would implement the first year of the Task Force for Improving Education’s recommendations and increase funding for Idaho’s K-12 public schools by 5.1 percent next fiscal year.

Superintendent Luna presented his proposed budget to the Joint Finance-Appropriation Committee (JFAC) this morning.

“I strongly believe implementation of the Task Force recommendations must begin today. The budget I have put forward today is a prudent plan for beginning to implement the Task Force recommendations and putting Idaho on a clear path to improving our public schools so that every child can graduate from high school prepared to go on to postsecondary education or the workforce without the need for remediation,” Superintendent Luna said.

The Task Force for Improving Education met for eight months in 2013 and developed 20 recommendations to help Idaho reach its goal for 60 percent of Idahoans, ages 25 to 34, to earn a postsecondary degree or certificate by 2020. The Task Force recommendations were published in September.

The recommendations include moving to a mastery-based system of education, broad support for the implementation of higher academic standards, increased technology to bridge the digital divide, a career ladder compensation plan for teachers, and restoration of operational funding for Idaho school districts, among others.

The full implementation of the Task Force recommendations will take five to six years. Superintendent Luna’s request for 5.1 percent in additional funding would implement the first phase of these recommendations.

Here are the highlights of Superintendent Luna’s budget request for Idaho’s public schools in fiscal year 2015:

Teacher Compensation:

The budget proposes \$16 million in new funding to implement the Leadership Awards portion of the new Career Ladder Compensation Model for Idaho’s teachers, as well as a 1 percent increase in the money that funds teacher salaries at the local level.

The Task Force developed a framework for the Career Ladder, which combines competitive salaries for teachers with incentives, rewards and accountability. The system will be tied to a revised system of state licensure. One portion of the Career Ladder is Leadership Awards to be distributed at the discretion of local school boards.

Once the Career Ladder is fully implemented, a beginning teacher in Idaho will make \$40,000 per year and can continue to earn salary increases based on experience, performance and other factors.

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Discretionary Funding:

Superintendent Luna supports the restoration of \$35 million in discretionary funding for local school districts and public charter schools in fiscal year 2015. Districts use this funding to pay for utilities, health care and other costs at the district level.

Advanced Opportunities:

Superintendent Luna proposes a \$2.4 million increase in additional funding to expand dual credit, Advanced Placement and other advanced opportunities for high school students. This will build upon the current Dual Credit for Early Completers Program, 8-in-6 and other statewide programs to fulfill the Task Force recommendation for Advanced Opportunities.

Professional Development:

The budget proposes \$12.2 million in continued funding for professional development for Idaho's teachers. This line item continues funding spent at the state level to provide professional development on the Idaho Core Standards this school year and also continues an estimated \$8 million to local school districts to provide professional development for teachers.

The budget also proposes \$300,000 in continued funding for administrative evaluations and an additional \$250,000 to provide master calendar training to assist school administrators in creating time for job-embedded professional development and collaboration among teachers. These budget line items help fulfill the Task Force recommendation for Training and Development of School Administrators, Superintendents, and School Boards, and for Job-Embedded Collaboration/Professional Development and Site-Based Collaboration, respectively.

Technology:

The budget proposes \$13.4 million in continued funding for classroom technology. Of this funding, more than \$8 million is distributed directly to local school districts to spend on integrating technology in the classroom, and \$2.25 million is spent at the state level to provide a wireless infrastructure, as well as support and maintenance for that infrastructure, in every public high school. In addition, \$3 million has been set aside for technology pilot projects in Idaho's public schools, and \$150,000 is being used to develop an online course portal for parents and students.

School Safety and Security:

The budget proposes \$2.75 million in funding for Safe- and Drug-Free School Programs. Of this, \$2.2 million will be distributed to local school districts to invest in Safe- and Drug-Free School Programs at the local level. The remainder will be used at the state level to support Idaho's schools and districts and to implement the recommendations of the School Safety and Security Task Force.

Continued Work:

The budget proposes \$300,000 for technical advisory committees and a student advisory committee to continue work on the Task Force recommendations. Several recommendations, such as the Career Ladder and Mastery-Based System, will require additional work before they can be fully implemented.

Superintendent Luna's budget proposal will now be considered by JFAC. If approved, it will move to the full House and Senate and need the Governor's signature for final approval.

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